



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

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INTERIOR DEPARTMENT ISSUES REGULATIONS FOR WALRUS HUNTING

Regulations to permit the revival of walrus trophy hunting off the coast of Alaska and promote the native economy by permitting the export of walrus hides by natives have been issued by the Department of the Interior, Assistant Secretary Ross L. Leffler announced today.

The regulations were issued under authority granted in legislation passed June 29, 1956, amending an act of 1941 which limited the harvest of the walrus in Alaska. At the time the legislation was being considered in 1956 it was reported that the walrus population had been stable for many years and since the walrus is a polygamous animal, regulated hunting of bulls would not endanger the resource.

Walruses are large marine mammals of subpolar distribution and originally were abundant throughout the Bering Sea region. During the early days of whaling from 1840 to 1890, walruses were hunted ruthlessly. From 12,000 to 15,000 animals were killed annually--far more than the reproductive rate could replace.

The regulations issued by the Department permit walrus hunting and allow the hunter to bring back the head and the hide but he must donate the meat to the inhabitants of the native village nearest the point of kill for use as food.

The conditions which govern walrus hunting for trophy purposes in 1957 are as follows: The hunting season will extend from May 15 to August 15 and is limited to Territorial waters of the Bering Sea, the Chukchi Sea, and the Arctic Ocean north of 59° N. Latitude. Walruses may be taken as trophies in this area only by the use of a rifle not smaller than a .30 caliber and no airplane or helicopter may be used in the taking. An airplane or helicopter, however, may be used to transport a hunter between a settlement or point of outfitting and a native village or other initial point from which a walrus hunt is to start.

A non-native hunter must employ and be accompanied by a native guide when taking a walrus. A payment of a license fee of \$25 is required of non-native residents of the Territory and a fee of \$50 is required if the applicant is not a resident. Natives are exempt from the license requirement.

As in past years, walruses may be taken by natives at any time for food and clothing for themselves and by miners, explorers or any other persons when in need of food and no other food is available. Under the regulations issued by the Department, it will now be possible to export from Alaska the hides from walruses taken for these purposes.

The hide of a mature walrus, used primarily in industry for buffing wheels to polish silver, is expected to yield from \$100 to \$120 in the light of the average weights of such hides. A firm export market for approximately 200 mature walrus hides each year exists through a commitment made by a firm in Portland, Oregon. Assistant Secretary Leffler said the sale and exportation of mature walrus hides should materially enhance the native economy.

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